

Message Text

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FOLLOWING REPEAT USNATO 00464 ACTION SECSTATE DATED JAN 16:

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E.O.11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PINT, IT, NATO
SUBJECT: ITALIAN SITUATION

REF: 77 STATE 303347

SUMMARY: THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE DISCUSSION AT NATO OF THE
ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION--PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF THE RE-
LUCTANCE OF ALLIED REPRESENTATIVES AND NATO OFFICIALS TO
DISCUSS THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF AN ALLIANCE MEMBER. IF
SUBSTANTIAL COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN THE ITALIAN GOVERN-
MENT IS CONFIRMED, ALLIED CONCERNS WILL FOCUS ON THE

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OVERALL THREAT TO WESTERN EUROPEAN STRATEGIC DEFENSE AND
ON THE NARROWER QUESTION OF THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF NATO
MATERIAL AND THE NATO CONSULTATIVE PROCESS. WE CONTINUE
TO FAVOR CAUTION REGARDING ANY PRE-PLANNING AT NATO HEAD-
QUARTERS ON THESE ISSUES. IF NECESSARY, NATO CAN REACT
QUICKLY ONCE POLITICAL GUIDANCE IS PROVIDED. ALLIES WILL
LOOK TO THE UNITED STATES TO TAKE THE LEAD. END SUMMARY.

1. HAVING IN MIND THE DEPARTMENT'S INSTRUCTIONS (REFTEL) TO AVOID SOLICITATION OF ORGANIZATION VIEWS, WE HAVE NOT SOUGHT OPINIONS HERE REGARDING ITALY'S POLITICAL CRISIS AND ITS POTENTIAL IMPACT ON NATO. WE JUDGE THAT OTHERS TOO HAVE BEEN OBSERVING A NEED TO AVOID DISCUSSION HERE OF THIS SENSITIVE SUBJECT INVOLVING THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF AN ALLIANCE MEMBER. INDEED, THE ONLY PERSON TO HAVE RAISED THE ISSUE AMONG PERMREPS HAS BEEN ITALIAN AMBASSADOR CATALANO WHO HAS STRESSED THE VERY SERIOUS DOMESTIC POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS WHICH WOULD ENSUE WERE NATO TO DEMONSTRATE A LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN ITALY BY NOT NAMING AN ITALIAN TO SUCCEED DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL PANSA.

2. WHILE OTHER DELEGATIONS ARE UNDOUBTEDLY ACUTELY AWARE OF THE IMPACT ON ALLIANCE SECURITY WERE THE PCI TO ACHIEVE A FORMAL ROLE IN ITALY'S GOVERNMENT, WE CONSIDER THAT UNDER THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES OF RELATIVE UNCERTAINTY REGARDING ITALY'S POLITICAL FUTURE, OTHER NATO MEMBERS WOULD BE RELUCTANT TO TAKE ACTION--THROUGH NATO OR IN THE NATO CONTEXT--RELATED TO A POTENTIAL INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION IN A MEMBER STATE. WERE THE WORST TO HAPPEN, HOWEVER, THEY WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY LOOK TO THE US TO TAKE THE LEAD IN SETTING THE COURSE OF ALLIANCE POLICY.

3. SHOULD PCI PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT BECOME A
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REALITY, THE ISSUES LIKELY TO COME TO THE FORE HERE ARE:

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- (A) THE OVERALL MILITARY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT OF A MAJOR ALLIANCE MEMBER. THE RANGE OF POSSIBLE PROBLEMS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SECURITY OF WESTERN EUROPE, THE MILITARY STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING OF THE ALLIANCE AND THE NATO/US POSITION ON THE SOUTHERN FLANK AND IN THE MEDITERRANEAN ARE EVIDENT AND SO VAST THAT WE WILL NOT ATTEMPT TO DISCUSS THEM HERE.

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- (B) THE RELATED BUT NARROWER PROBLEM OF PRESERVING THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF NATO MATERIAL AND THE NATO CONSULTATIVE PROCESS WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE THE FIRST OPERATIONAL ISSUE NATO WOULD ADDRESS.

4. WE BELIEVE THAT (ASIDE FROM POSSIBLY ELICITING SYG LUNS' VIEWS) ANY INITIAL SOUNDINGS AND CONSULTATIONS WITH OTHER ALLIES ON MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO POTENTIAL PCI PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE TAKEN BILATERALLY WITH KEY ALLIES--NOT AT NATO HEADQUARTERS. RAISING THE ISSUE AT NATO, EVEN IN A RESTRICTED FORUM WITHOUT THE ITALIANS

WOULD LIKELY LEAK AND BE SEEN AS A POLITICAL GESTURE OF NO CONFIDENCE IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT AS AN ALLY. (NOTE: WE TOOK THIS LINE IN LATE 1975 WHEN THE NATO SECURITY OFFICE, IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ITALIAN ELECTIONS, RAISED INFORMALLY WITH US THE QUESTION OF PRESERVING THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF NATO MATERIAL-PARA 3B ABOVE. AT THAT TIME WE OPPOSED ANY PREPLANNING IN THIS AREA. IN ADDITION TO THE UNCERTAINTIES OF THE ELECTION OUTCOME, WE WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF LEAKS. THE SAME CONCERNS LEAD US TO BELIEVE WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO DISCOURAGE PRE-PLANNING AT THIS STAGE. FURTHERMORE, ANY SUCH CONTINGENCY PLANNING COULD REALISTICALLY ONLY ADDRESS THE QUESTION OF MATERIAL TO WHICH THE ITALIANS MIGHT GAIN ACCESS BETWEEN A DECISION TO CUT THE ITALIANS OFF AND THE ACTIONS TO DO SO.

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HOWEVER, SHOULD COMMUNISTS GAIN ACCESS TO NATO DOCUMENTS, THE MOST IMMEDIATE QUESTIONS WOULD INVOLVE THE VAST AMOUNT OF SENSITIVE NATO MATERIAL ALREADY IN ITALIAN HANDS AND ACTIONS TO MINIMIZE THE POTENTIAL DAMAGE FROM THIS SITUATION.)

5. AT SOME STAGE, HOWEVER, CONSULTATIONS IN NATO COULD BE USED TO SEND A POLITICAL MESSAGE TO EUROPE AND THE ITALIANS, BUT USE OF THIS CHANNEL SHOULD BE PREDICATED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT IT WOULD BE A SEMI-PUBLIC DEMARCHE.

6. IN SUM, AS WE SEE IT, US LEADERSHIP WILL BE THE KEY, AND ANY INITIAL CONSULTATION ABOUT WHAT TO DO SHOULD BE OUTSIDE THE NATO FORUM. NATO BUREAUCRATIC, SECURITY, AND EVEN STAFF AND COMMAND ARRANGEMENTS AND ADJUSTMENTS CAN BE IMPLEMENTED RAPIDLY IF THERE IS A CLEAR POLITICAL DECISION THAT THEY ARE NECESSARY. THEREFORE WE DO NOT FAVOR EXTENSIVE ADVANCE PLANNING AT NATO WHICH COULD LEAK AND COMPLICATE US EFFORTS. DECISIONS ON HOW NATO SHOULD RESPOND TO PCI PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT--DECISIONS FRAUGHT WITH GRAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ALLIANCE--SHOULD BE TAKEN ONLY AFTER THE MOST CAREFUL STUDY BY THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE USG.

7. DEPARTMENT REPEAT TO OTHER ADDRESSEES AS DESIRED.
GLITMAN UNQTE CHRISTOPHER

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